

**NICOLA
VASSELL**

Opening January 11, 6–8 pm
January 11 — February 24, 2024

ELIZABETH SCHWAIGER:

Now & Now & Now



Gallery Hours

Tuesday–Saturday, 10 am–6 pm

138 10th Ave. New York, NY 10011

For Press Inquiries

Hannah Gottlieb-Graham, ALMA Communications — hannah@almacommunications.co

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the thing I came for:
the wreck and not the story of the wreck
the thing itself and not the myth
the drowned face always staring
toward the sun
the evidence of damage
worn by salt and sway into this threadbare beauty
the ribs of the disaster
curving their assertion
among the tentative haunters.

—Excerpt from “Diving into the Wreck” by Adrienne Rich

Nicola Vassell is pleased to announce exclusive representation of painter Elizabeth Schwaiger, and her first solo exhibition at the gallery. Opening on January 11, 2024, *Now & Now & Now*, will include a new series of paintings offering expeditions into unpeopled spaces, unrestrained nature, and uncanny interiors. Submerging herself into physical and psychic depths, she found her subject matter in the art studio—understood both as a historic site to preserve relics of creative ritual, and an expressive place that she can inhabit, at times, more intimately than her own body. Schwaiger renders these ethereal domains with dissonant materials; she applies watercolor, acrylic, ink, and oil to canvas in chromatically harmonious, but thinly veiled layers that bleed, permeate, and blur into overgrown, evanescent sceneries. Shaped by her personal experiences with childbirth and scuba diving—empirically disparate but sensorially analogous—Schwaiger’s life and practice are subsumed by forces greater than herself.

In pregnancy, the boundaries of one’s own body and mind cannot be relied upon as both are ultimately subject to the phenomena of the physical world. Nature is a mother, full of rage, uncontrollable, creative, destructive, self-sacrificing—birther of all. In scuba diving, a weightless disruption of the senses leads to a dizzying surrender of one’s awareness to the unknown depths. Fears and hopes are no longer intellectual or emotional exercises, but become physical knowledge, visceral experiences.

Schwaiger’s compositions capture an ominous placidity in which it is unclear whether one is staring into the eye of, or the wake of, her inner tempest. As in the poem “Dear Darkening Ground” by Rainer Maria Rilke, the world she characterizes and speaks to has “endured so patiently the walls we’ve built / perhaps you’ll give the cities one more hour,” and portends the moment “before you become forest again, and water, and widening / wilderness / in that hour of inconceivable terror / when you take back your name / from all things.” Her interiors are ruins built with contradiction, at once gentle, meticulous archives, and fragile, fleeting wreckages. They are artifacts of nature’s inevitable cycles. With each work, she confronts the concept of an overwhelming and powerful might pushing in, either as a consequence of hubris, indifference, or misguided attempts to dominate decay.

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About Elizabeth Schwaiger

Elizabeth Schwaiger is a research-based artist living and working in Brooklyn. She received her BA from The University of North Texas and MFA from the Glasgow School of Art. In her decade-long exploration of power dynamics and the climate crises, Schwaiger has used variegated symbolism to depict water, fracturing, dimensional overlay and gesture, to construct images suggestive of the interplay among unseen forces that govern our world. She has exhibited in the UK, the USA and Seoul, Korea including shows at The Walker Gallery National Museum in Liverpool, The Macintosh Museum in Glasgow, The National Portrait Gallery in London, Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff, Glasgow International, Embassy Gallery in Edinburgh, Blue Star Contemporary in San Antonio, and Co-Lab Projects and GrayDUCK Gallery in Austin. Recent projects include a solo presentation at the Independent Art Fair with Nicola Vassell Gallery in NYC as well as a solo exhibition titled *Pressing Shadows* at Gana Art in Seoul, Korea. She was an artist in residence at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation in Captiva, Florida in 2019. Her work has been featured in *Forbes*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *The Catlin Guide*, *fields magazine*, *Floorr*, *Fusebox Written & Spoken*, *Newfound*, *Conflict of Interest*, *Sightlines*, and *The Austin Chronicle*. Schwaiger is represented by Nicola Vassell in New York.

About Nicola Vassell Gallery

Nicola Vassell is a contemporary art gallery committed to discourse that widens the lens of the history and future of art. Its focus is on developing an inter-generational, cross-disciplinary program of international artists and thinkers.